



Extreme Heat and Your Pets

From mid July through the remaining summer days, blistering heat and scorching sun punishes city dwellers when they leave the comfort of their air conditioned homes. Suffocating humidity makes the city feel like a sauna. Occasional breezes offer scant relief. Residents swarm to municipal pools, beaches, or parks to cool down. This same heat that causes great discomfort to humans also increases the number of calls from concerned citizens regarding outside pets. So what happens to outside pets that struggle with relentless heat?

Pets can suffer from the same problems that humans do in hot weather. These health concerns include overheating, dehydration, and even sunburn. By taking simple precautions, you can keep your animal companions healthy and happy in higher temperatures.

Always provide plenty of shade and or shelter; provide plenty of clean cool water at all times; change water at least once daily. Bring your pets inside during the hottest part of the day (11-6). Owners of canines with heavy coats can help by cutting the hair to a one-inch length.

Some animals will need extra special care in hot weather, especially those who are very old, very young, overweight, heavy coated breeds, so called arctic breeds of dogs, and those who have a heart or lung disease. If your pet is showing signs of heat stroke or exhaustion, take them to the veterinarian immediately.

Signs of heat stress include profuse panting, salivation, staring, and unresponsive, anxious expression, warm dry skin, high fever, high heart rate, muscle weakness and inability to move. **HEAT STRESS CAN BE FATAL!**

Common sense tells most people that leaving their pet inside a parked vehicle on a hot summer day could be dangerous after an extended period of time. Most people don't realize that the temperature can skyrocket after just a few minutes. Parking in the shade or cracking the windows does little to alleviate this pressure cooker. On warm, sunny days windows collect light, trapping heat inside the vehicle which pushes the temperature inside to dangerous levels. On an 85 degree day, for example, the temperature inside a car with the windows opened slightly can reach 102 degrees within ten minutes. After 30 minutes, the temperature will reach 120 degrees. At 110 degrees, pets are in danger of heatstroke. On hot humid days, the temperature in a car parked in direct sunlight can rise more than 30 degrees per minute, quickly becoming lethal.

Pets are much less efficient at cooling themselves than people are. Dogs, for example, are designed to conserve heat. Their sweat glands, which exist on their nose and the pads of their feet, are inadequate for cooling during hot days. Panting and drinking water helps cool them, but if they only have overheated air to breathe, dogs can suffer brain and organ damage after just 15 minutes.

I hope this information helps each of us in our duties to protect the animals in our community. If there is anything we can do to help you, please let us know, 856-7312, Gardner Public Safety.